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ABSTRACT

This issue of the Australian Early Childhood Association Research in Practice Series discusses how educators can observe and respond appropriately to the infants in their care. The booklet examines the two major opportunities for early childhood educators that have been shown to influence outcomes for infants: (1) the opportunity to help infants make sense of their world; and (2) the opportunity to provide an emotionally sustaining environment to enable them to make the most of their learning capabilities. The booklet discusses using infant care tasks such as diaper changing and dressing to support development and features a range of interactional games for infants from birth to 3 months, 3 to 6 months, and 6 to 12 months. The booklet further describes relationship-building activities involving responsive communication, including imitation and turn taking, and considers the development of attachment relationships. The booklet also discusses cross-cultural issues. (Contains 13 references and resources.) (KB)

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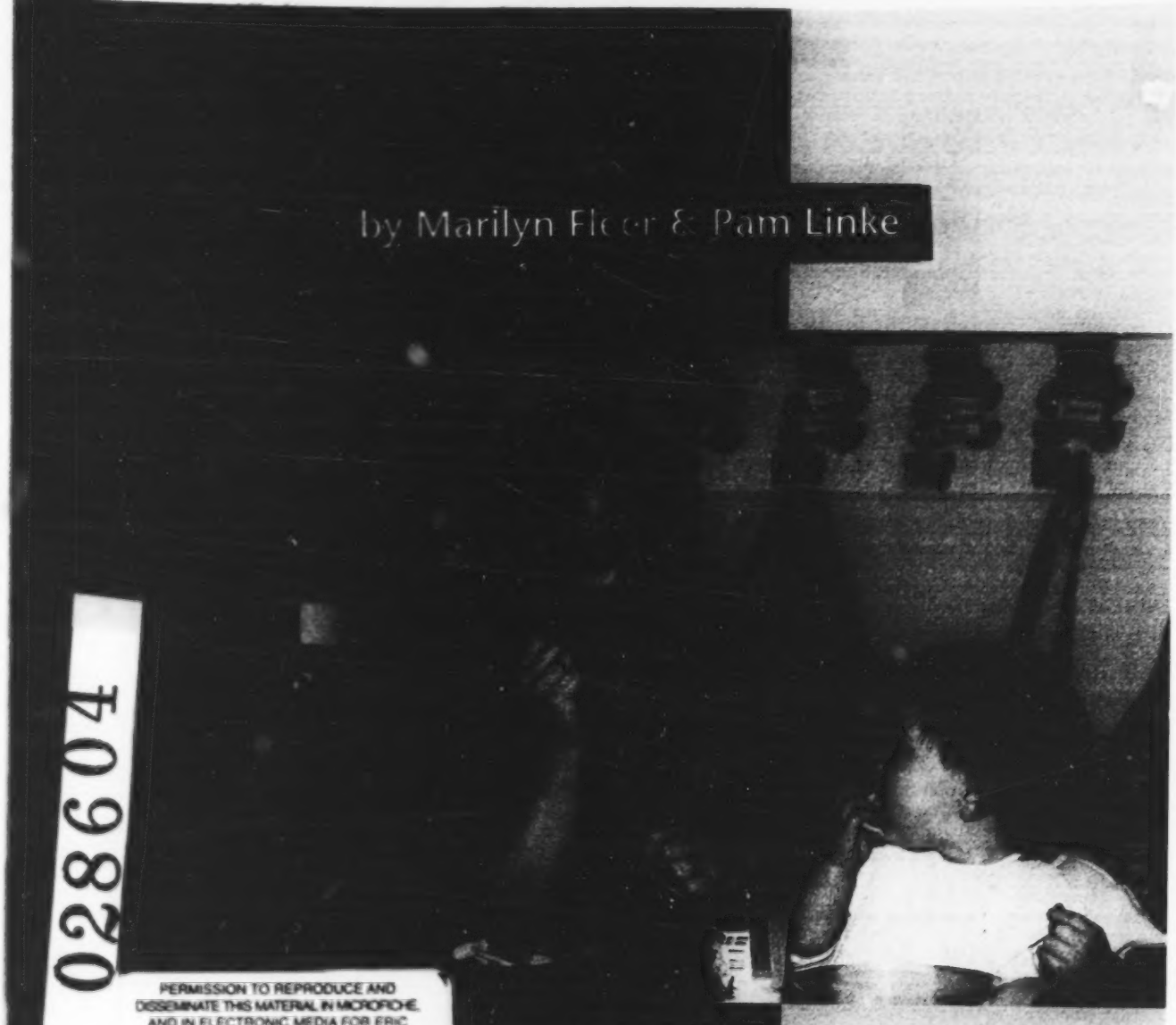
BABIES

Responding Appropriately to Infants

by Marilyn Fleer & Pam Linke



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The series aims to provide practical, easy to read, up-to-date information and support to a growing national readership of early childhood workers. The books bring together the best information available on wide ranging topics and are an ideal resource for children's services workers and others interested in the care and education of young children. Books produced in previous years have now become standard texts in many early childhood courses.

The AECA Publications Committee invites contributions on all aspects of the education and care of young children. Given the multi-disciplinary nature of the field, contributions from all disciplines concerned with young children and their families are welcome.

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BABIES

Responding Appropriately to Infants

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This book discusses how educators can observe and respond appropriately to the babies in their care. It looks at the two major opportunities for early childhood educators that have been shown to influence outcomes for infants—the opportunity to help infants make sense of their world (cognition) and the opportunity to provide an emotionally sustaining environment to enable infants to make the most of their learning capabilities. Both are fundamental to optimal development. Infants cannot learn if the learning opportunities are not there or if stress prevents them responding to those opportunities.

A range of interactional games is featured for infants from 0-3 months; 3–6 months; and 6–12 months. Cross-cultural issues are also discussed.

BABIES *Responding Appropriately to Infants*

This book is about working with infants under one year of age. Recent research into brain development and into carer-infant relationships highlights the importance of sensitive, responsive relationships to the ongoing emotional, social, and cognitive development of the child. The book is an opportunity for early childhood educators to reflect on their practice in the light of this research so that the infants entrusted to our care get the best possible start towards fulfilling their potential.

Each carer-infant relationship is unique, and it is from the pattern of these relationships that the infant learns to make sense of the world.

The earliest months of life are the fastest-growing period in a child's life and the time when the foundations are laid for the child's future development. There is no more important time in children's education. Recent research into infant brain development provides evidence of this (Shore, 1997; Nelson & Carver, 1998; Perry & Pollard, 1998).

- Shore (1997) has argued that 'early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain, and on the nature and extent of adult capacities. Early interactions don't just create a context; they directly effect the way the brain is "wired"' (Shore, p.18; her emphasis).
- Attachment (a strong and trusting relationship with one or more carers) in the first year has been shown to be related to social skills and cognition in later childhood (Murray & Cooper, 1997).
- Perry and Pollard (1998) emphasise the importance of stress on infants' brain development. They contend that change is stressful for everyone, but less so for adults who have some experience to guide their adaptation to new situations. Infants have no previous experience to build on, and all situations are completely new at first—even a nappy change.

The importance of responsiveness to infant needs cannot be overrated in the impact it has on the infant's development

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When adults note what a baby is looking at and follow the baby's lead, joint attention is established. The infant learns that she is an important part of the communication process.

'Childhood experiences define the adult by shaping the developing brain' (Perry, 1998)

- Heidelise Als (1997) in her work with newborn premature babies found that, even in the neonatal nursery, infants responded very positively when the caregiving teams were trained to learn the infants' communication signals and to adapt their caring to their needs rather than to the routines of the nursery. The infants in Als' program went home from hospital sooner and did better than controls on cognitive and behavioural tests both at 18 months and at eight years of age. The importance of responsiveness to infant needs cannot be overrated in the impact it has on the infant's development.

Infancy poses particular challenges to the early childhood educator, since babies do not have the words to communicate their needs to adults. Adults need to take the time to learn to 'read' the signals of each infant in their care. Reading such cues is a complex task requiring sensitivity, responsiveness, and intimate knowledge of individual infants. It means to listen and watch and reflect, and to base the care and education of the infant on this. Each carer-infant relationship is unique, and it is from the patterns of these relationships that the infant learns to make sense of the world.

This book discusses how educators can observe and respond appropriately to the babies in their care. It looks at the two major opportunities for early childhood educators that have been shown to influence outcomes for infants—*the opportunity to help infants make sense of their world (cognition) and the opportunity to provide an emotionally sustaining environment to enable infants to make the most of their learning capabilities. Both are fundamental to optimal development. Infants cannot learn if the learning opportunities are not there or if stress prevents them responding to those opportunities.*

A range of interactional games is featured for infants from 0–3 months; 3–6 months; and 6–12 months. Cross-cultural issues are also discussed.

The early months of one infant, Freya, illustrate the child's development and the corresponding caregiving behaviours. Because Freya is a girl, the pronouns used in the text are feminine—she/her. All references to infants apply equally to children of both sexes.

The basis for learning

The basis for learning is to build on where the learner is. This is no different whether the learner is six weeks or 60 years old.

Caring for infants cannot be set down in schedules and lists. Adequate care for the very young is part of a critical and living relationship, and only in this environment will children flourish. The two most important elements of working with infants are:

- sensitive interactions; and
- relationship building.

Task-based care	Relationship-based care
Task-based	Related to the whole child, not just the task
Staff schedule driven	Infant rhythm driven
Program focused	Infant need focused
Action	Stop, look, listen, reflect first
Doing to	Doing with
Task-related	Relationship-related

'Development can proceed in an optimal fashion when the presentation of new stimuli is safe, nurturing, predictable, repetitive, gradual, and attuned to the infant or child's developmental stage.'

(Perry, 1998)

What the infant brings

When educators find out how infants respond to different caregiving techniques and adapt their behaviour to these responses they give the infants an optimal learning environment.

Infants attending child care have experienced a range of culturally and family-specific experiences, including interactions, games, and songs. In beginning interactions with infants it is important to find out about the baby's preferences in order to engage the baby and reduce the stress which inhibits learning.

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Take time to get to know the infant with her parent. Below are suggested questions that carers could ask:

- Tell and show me about your baby (personality, likes, dislikes,etc).
- How does your baby like to be held?
- How does your baby like to go to sleep?
- What does your baby like to eat/drink?
- How does your baby show that she is upset?
- What games does your baby like to play?
- What words do you use with your baby for toileting/nappy-changing?
- Does your baby have a comforter (dummy, soft toy, etc.)?
- Do you have special words that you use with your baby?

Note: The language the infant is accustomed to hearing is an important part of her environment. Finding out the simple words used with the infant, including how parents address the infant at home, will help carers to bridge the transistion between home and care.

Cultural as well as individual variations need to be considered when responding to babies. Some babies like close contact, others will wish to move about free of adult hindrance (this may be a cultural or individual preference, or both). All babies are unique individuals who will inform carers about what they like and do not like. The early childhood educator needs to watch closely for the babies' cues.

An important part of the infant's cultural experiences and of early pleasurable interactions are the little games that are played between carer and infant. For example, the following song is often sung to Freya by her Oma (grandmother):

'Hop a hop a Reiter
wenn du fallst dann schreiste
fallst du in den Sumpf
dann macht der Reiter plums'

Translation: Hop, hop, rider
When you fall you cry
If you fall in the bog
Then the rider goes 'plumps!'

With baby Freya on her knee, Oma holds Freya's hands and jiggles her up and down in time while singing; Freya is moved sideways off Oma's knee on 'plumps'. This singing game is a familiar and pleasurable experience for Freya.

Responsive and relationship-building activities

Reading infants' messages

Interactions must involve infants in the communication process. Infants communicate their needs from birth (Kubicek, 1996, p.28). From the earliest days after birth they respond to internal cues, and their needs are signalled mostly by crying. Prompt responses to crying are important, as is gradually learning what the cries of each infant mean. *It is also important to learn to respond to infants' less powerful signals.* Freya, at 10 days old, would purse her lips in a certain way when she needed to be held by her mother, even when being held by someone else. When she was given to her mother to hold, her face became peaceful again. Because this early signal was responded to, Freya began to learn that she was *an active*

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partner in the relationship—not just a passive receiver of attention. With less sensitive carers an opportunity would have been lost to help Freya begin the journey of exploring her relationship with her world and her own special place in it.

When we tune into babies we look for non-verbal, emotionally charged signals such as:

- different cries and vocalisations;
- gaze;
- body movements (arms, legs, arching of back);
- body postures; and
- facial expressions such as smiles, eyes widening, frowns, squinting and wincing, yawning.

Through repeated experiences and interactions with sensitive educators, infants begin to learn how communication works. If we do not respond to infant cues, the baby will not learn that she is an active partner in the communication process. This is important for the infant beginning to see herself as an active learner and for the beginnings of literacy.

What does the baby seem to be saying? According to Kubicek (1996, p.28), adults need to 'tune in' to the infant's emotional signals and actively 'listen' to them.

Responsive communication with infants

When adults are responsive to infants, the infants learn that they are important partners in the communication process.

In the interaction process detailed below, Freya, initially at one day old and later at eight weeks, is learning that she is an important partner in the communication process.

Freya is one day old, and Oma is already beginning the communication process. She:

- has moved the infant within a good focal distance (about 30 cms from her face);
- has positioned the infant's body at such an angle that there is ease of viewing between Freya and Oma;
- moves her head up and down with each vocalisation, pausing for infant response;
- exaggerates her mouth movements to attract the infant's attention;
- deliberately focuses on her eyes, but watches Freya's face and waits for any response from the infant.

Freya at one day old being positioned for optimal communication

When adults imitate the early expressions of the infants, it is part of the beginnings of mutual conversation. Some of the earliest gestures which can become reciprocal 'conversations' between adult and infant may include:

- poking out the tongue;
- opening the mouth;
- making a funny face;
- smile;
- early vocalisations e.g. 'oo-oo-oo' or soft 'boo-boo-oo';
- blowing raspberries.

It is important that the adults in Freya's environment position her in the manner shown above so that communication can be established and prolonged.

The basis for 'reading' and responding to infants' cues lies in establishing communication between the infant and adult(s). In this process the adults are the learners, as they need to follow the infant's lead. The infant learns that she is an important partner in the communication process. It is important for adults to allow time for interchanges to take place. Similarly, carers can also lead interactions in tune with the infant's responses and needs.

For infants under three months, the alert periods are short in duration and therefore should be viewed as 'windows of opportunity' for interacting with infants.

The key consideration is that the adult is 'in tune' with the infant — that she/he allows time for the infant to respond, goes further when the infant shows interest and retreats if the infant is finding it stressful or needing a rest, e.g. looking away.

Imitation and turn-taking

Turn-taking is part of the development of a sense of self. It says to the infants that they have been noticed and heard and that they matter. It is the beginning of learning that they can affect their world rather than just be passive recipients of whatever happens to them.

In meaningful turn-taking the early childhood educator responds to the infant's facial gesture or vocalisation then waits to give the infant time to respond again ('listening' to the infant). It is important to allow the infant control over the game and, if the infant looks away, showing that perhaps the adult is too intrusive, to accept this as a signal to stop. Even very young infants can signal when they want to stop an interaction or activity, e.g. by looking away. Signals are individual—different infants may signal in different ways. Individual differences need to be noted by the adult. When babies signal that they are being over-stimulated the adult should stop and wait for the infant to resume interaction.

Attracting the baby's attention

In the photo on page six, Freya's Oma has positioned Freya in the 'talking position' and is observing her face closely to see if she is alert and wanting to engage in a conversation. She begins the interaction by drawing the baby's attention to her face.

Once Freya's attention is directed towards Oma's face, vocalisations intensify. Freya looks intently at Oma. Oma keeps talking to the infant, nodding her head, moving her mouth widely and pausing in between sounds, watching for the infant's response. Freya initially watches Oma's mouth closely. Then she begins to move her tongue as she watches.

After five or so interactions from Oma, Freya opens her mouth. Oma responds by smiling and intensifying her vocalisations. This causes Freya to smile and continue to open her mouth. After 10 interactions the infant also tries to make sounds.

Her sounds occur as one-second calls. Freya waves her arms with excitement. Oma responds immediately with smiles and intensified vocalisations—'Oh you're talking to me'; 'Tell me some more'; 'What are you trying to say?'; 'Talk to Oma', etc.

Baby looks at face

Baby concentrates on mouth

Baby begins vocalising

Concentrating on producing more vocalisations

Freya moves her mouth and arms and looks intently at Oma (studying her mouth). The infant appears to be trying to make further vocalisations. However, she strains and then cries in frustration as the sounds are not forthcoming. Oma immediately says 'You are trying to tell me something, but it just won't come out', as she cuddles and comforts Freya.

Freya's Oma shows respect for Freya's capabilities as well as her frustrations by immediately comforting her when she is distressed.

Freya is upset as no further vocalisations are forthcoming

Building relationships with infants

For the infant, learning takes place in the context of relationships. Even very young infants begin to develop relationships with those who care for them. They learn to know the world by the ways they are held and spoken to and changed and fed. The pattern of relating learned from each carer is different and unique to that relationship. If there are too many changes of carer (too many patterns) it can be confusing and inhibiting to the young infant with an immature nervous system and a strange new world in which to learn to live.

Attachment

Attachment is the relationship where an infant develops special trust with a particular adult or adults. This relationship enables the infant to feel safe in exploring the world, trying new things, and moving forward. Strong attachment with at least one person by the end of the first year is related to resilience (Werner, 1982), and to cognition and social development (Murray & Cooper, 1998). Optimal learning takes place in the framework of a secure, responsive, and encouraging environment.

After the first half of the first year of life infants are likely to become anxious in new situations and to feel safe with the presence of an attachment person. They often follow the person to whom they are attached in order to feel secure. The presence of this person reduces stress for the infant and enables her to get the most benefit from learning opportunities.

Infants also use that person for social referencing. In new situations, that might in some way be frightening, they look to see how their special person reacts, and this gives them clues as to whether the situation is safe or not. Thus the attachment person can help the infant to relate to new staff or situations, to learn when it is safe to reach out and explore.

Sometimes a parent or early childhood educator will be concerned that, if the educator develops a relationship with the infant (i.e. the infant becomes attached), this will diminish the infant's relationship with the parent. This is not the case. In fact a relationship with one or more other caring adults will enhance rather than detract from the infant's attachment to the parent. It becomes a model for the child of successful attachment relationships. Attachment patterns are unique to each special relationship, but the patterns of learning to be attached (to learn to trust and to have a sense of security) can be transferred to other relationships in the present and future.

The infant needs to learn that she can influence her world (internal locus of control). *Internal locus of control* is one of the qualities that make up resilience. Infants should not feel that things are always 'done to them'. They need to feel that they have some control over themselves and their environment—that they can influence their world and take risks with learning.

Carers can provide situations where infants start to learn that they can control their environment in many small but important ways, for example:

- when the infant can hit or kick a toy and make it rattle;
- when the infant pushes the carer and the carer falls back;
- when the infant smiles and receives a smile in return;
- when the carer 'reads' and responds to the infant's messages;
- when the infant's new learning is greeted with approval and delight by the carer.

One of the first essentials in developing relationships in the early childhood setting is to try to ensure that each infant has a special early childhood educator to relate to

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Infants need to be treated with respect

Respect

The teaching of respect for oneself and others begins in infancy. It begins with the respect that the early childhood educator shows the infants in the everyday things done for them.

Respect is shown by warning infants about what is going to be done to them, rather than just picking them up and doing whatever is necessary. Explain what you are doing for even very young infants. This helps them to make sense of the world and also to know that you respect them. Carers can create a sense of expectancy in their interactions so the infant begins to learn to predict what will happen next. It is likely to be much more stressful for an infant if an adult suddenly 'descends' on her and picks her up, or changes a nappy, than if the infant is warned of the impending change by familiar words and/or actions. Freya's parents play a little game, saying 'Up, up, up' before Freya is picked up so she learns what is going to happen to her.

Talk with infants about what you are doing. Let them know by words and tone of voice that their activity or position is going to be changed. Respect means treating the infant's feelings as important and her body with sensitivity, and taking this into account in your actions.

Using the caring tasks to support infants' development

Nappy-changing

Nappy-changing is an intimate task which can be a special time between carer and infant. It is a time where respect is important, respect shown in the way you talk to the infant about what is being done and by respectful and gentle touching. It is a time for the beginnings of teaching infants to respect and value their own bodies as you gently and respectfully care for them—focussing on the infant as well as the task.

For some infants, it can also be a time for little games that develop out of the relationship and are special to the relationship. For example, allowing the infant to push against you with a foot and then fall back teaches cause and effect. Little touching and cuddling games communicate care and help to develop the relationship.

Dressing

Some infants do not enjoy being dressed or washed. It is important to recognise when particular practices cause distress for babies. Carers can reconsider how they may go about these tasks—even reflecting upon the need for them. For example,

some babies do not like having clothing pulled over their heads. Perhaps the infant can be put in clothing that wraps around (e.g. buttoned singlets; velcro or tie bibs). Similarly, some babies do not enjoy having their faces wiped. These events can turn into games—giving the infant a wet flannel and playing peek-a-boo (or younger infants who may like to suck on the flannel will gladly take the cloth and play with it—thus reducing the need for a lot of wiping). Each infant will be different. Find out what works for particular babies by careful observing and a willingness to try a range of ideas.

Each infant will be different. Find out what works for particular babies by careful observing and a willingness to try a range of ideas

Developmental games

Observing babies will allow carers to invent games or note interactional styles appropriate for the particular infants. A wall chart for each baby (as shown in Table 1.) is a useful planning tool for carers (i.e. easy reference for games baby enjoys) and for parents (opportunity to share other games families play at home with their baby).

At six months, when Freya was learning about object permanence, she was introduced to a game of peek-a-boo, using 'see through' scarves, by Kaye, a family friend. Kaye started the game by placing the scarf over her head, then lifting it and saying 'boo'. When Freya responded positively, Kaye placed the scarf over Freya's head and waited for Freya to lift it. When she did, Kaye smiled, leaned forward and said 'boo'. Freya's laughter, smiles, and vocalisations provided cues for Kaye in determining the duration and extent of the game.

Give and take games involve the infant selecting an object and passing it over to the adult. The adult accepts with full gestures and then hands the object back to the infant. This is repeated until the participants lose interest. These turn-taking sequences can evolve into little rituals or rhythmic sequences which become part of the infant's developing trust in the carer (See Table 4 for games involving turn-taking).

Table 1: Interactive play sessions

Special things Freya likes:

Interactive play sessions I know Freya likes	Reason for game/interactional pattern	Special times, things, and games Freya likes to play at home

Note: it is important to update this table regularly to take account of new development and learning.

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Table 2 suggests a range of interactive play sessions suitable for infants aged 0 to 3 months. In these early months the focus is on 'tuning in' to infants, and helping the infants learn that they are important partners in the communication process and building trust.

Table 3 highlights some of the games that 3 to 6-month-old infants enjoy. Turn-taking, imitation, and helping babies feel they have a sense of control over their lives is featured during these months. In Table 4 a range of highly interactive games is listed. Infants aged 6 to 12 months are displaying a keen interest in every facet of their environment. They know that things exist even when they cannot be seen, they recognise and call for familiar individuals, and are showing an understanding of language.

The role of the early childhood professional is to find out the preference for each individual infant in care

The games shown in Table 4 highlight ways that learning can be furthered. What is important in planning for infants is to observe, observe, and observe! The repertoire of one-to-one interactions for a particular infant will be unique to that infant. The role of the early childhood professional is to find out the preference for each individual infant in care.

Table 2: Interactive play sessions for infants aged 0–3 months

Interactive play session	Reason for game/interactional pattern
Cooing and smiling turns. Adult makes cooing sounds, then waits for baby's response—alternating between making sounds and waiting for infant to respond.	Turn-taking talk; babies learn they are important partners in the communication process. Beginning of language learning and sense of self.
Imitation games. Adult pokes tongue out then in and waits for baby to copy. *Baby as teacher.* Adult also copies baby's mouth movements.	Communication patterns are being established, particularly turn-taking. Baby begins to see that her/his behaviour can have an effect on another.
What are you looking at? Adult watches baby's gaze and reflection on cornea to determine what baby is looking at. Adult moves infant closer to object or moves object to baby for further exploration with hands, feet, or mouth. Adult comments on baby's attention 'speaks for the baby'	Joint attention; capitalising on infant's interest in their environment; beginnings of learning the pointing gesture; sensitivity to the infant's needs.
Kisses and raspberries games. Adult indicates game by opening mouth wide. Adult blows raspberries or kisses on stomach, cheeks, or neck. Then draws back and makes eye contact and smiles. Then repeats.	Building expectancy/making sense of the world. The infant begins to see that there is some predictability in the relationship being established and gains a sense of what is to take place during these games.
Dance. Adult plays rhythmical music and moves in time while holding infant close to body.	Infant is stimulated kinesthetically. Whole body bonding with adult is occurring. Infant is learning about the basic rhythm in music.
Smiling. Adult smiles at baby; when infant makes movement with mouth, adult squeals with delight. Over time, progressively more smiles will occur. By two months babies will be able to smile at objects and people they recognise.	Infant is developing socially and emotionally. Smiling is an important communication signal—for baby to understand her power and for receiving smiles. Smiles show affection and approval—development of attachment and self-esteem.

(continued...)

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Table 2 (continued): Interactive play sessions for infants aged 0–3 months

Interactive play session	Reason for game/interactional pattern
Up, up, up! Adult lets infant know she is about to be moved by saying 'up, up, up' as the adult puts hands behind infant's shoulders and gives a tickle.	Infant begins to understand when she is going to be moved—not sudden and unexpected motion often startling baby. Language development. Teaching of personal respect.
Singing. Adult sings rhythmical songs to infant when held or during nappy changing. For example; *This is the way we change your nappy, change your nappy, change your nappy*, etc.	Establishing communication patterns with infant. Expectations about behavioural regularities and communicative routines/ sequences are developed. Language development.
Eye-contact game. Adult makes sounds with mouth to draw attention to her/his face. When infant has finished visually exploring mouth, and gazes towards eyes, this should be reinforced will squeals of delight. Over time the infant will begin to look more at the eyes rather than concentrating on the mouth. Each time the adult should smile with eyes.	Infant is socialised into understanding that eye contact is an important form of communication in Western societies.
Bicycles: Rhythmically playing bicycles with legs or arms. Adult smiles or vocalises at baby and observes responses.	Playful interactions build trust.

Table 3: Interactive play sessions for infants aged 3–6 months

Interactive play session	Reason for game/interactional pattern
Singing rhythm games. Moving infant's arms and legs while singing '*Johnny* (child's name) *works with one hammer, one hammer, one hammer*, etc'.	Establishing communication patterns; building trust; rhythm. Expectations about behavioural regularities and communicative routines/sequences are developed.
Books. Showing picture books containing photographs of people, babies, and brightly-coloured objects. Adult points to images and talks about the images.	Infant learns how books work—pages are turned, new image on each page. Infant begins to understand that books are for looking at and talking about.
Baby tickles or raspberry-blowing. Adult finds other places on the infant's body to tickle or blow raspberries onto. Smiling and laughing by adults will generate similar responses by baby.	Building expectancy. Relationship/ attachment-building.
Knee games. Babies will be able to sit upright on lap. This will allow the adult to play knee games such as *London bridge is falling down*– baby is bounced up and down until the bridge falls down, whereby baby falls sideways with adult; *Giddy-up horsey*– infant is bounced until the end, whereby the adult pulls the infant's arms up as though pulling rein in.	Establishing communication patterns; building trust; rhythm. Expectations about behavioural regularities and communicative routines/sequences are developed.
Aeroplane rides. Infant is held horizontally above adult, who is also horizontal. Infant is moved around the air. Adult maintains eye contact and makes engine sounds; smiling as infant's body is made to dip and dive.	Playful interactions build trust. Body awareness.

Table 4: Interactive play sessions for infants aged 6–12 months

Interactive play session	Reason for game/interactional pattern
Copy cat. Baby will imitate many sounds; Adult says single words such as 'dada' for infant to copy.	Establishing communication patterns with infant. Language development.
Baby as teacher. Adult will observe infant's gaze or pointing gesture or vocalisations in order to further discuss or explore objects in their environment.	Joint attention. Internal locus of control.
Looking at the world upside down. Adult holds infant by legs and moves them into air. Some babies will enjoy being gently dropped and caught.	Playful interactions build trust; building expectancy.
Pretend falling. Baby is placed on lap in standing position. Adult holds hands and allows baby to fall backwards.	Playful interactions build trust; building expectancy.
Peek-a-boo under sheets or bunny rugs. Adults can drape a sheet over self or baby. Similar games can be developed for hiding behind or inside boxes and large items such as blocks.	Object permanence. Infant develops an understanding that people and things exist when they cannot see them—rather than 'out of sight, out of mind'. Helps deal with separation anxiety.
Bouncing. One, Two, Three, and up! Adult bounces baby up and down while counting. After three, the adult lifts and cuddles infant.	Building a sense of expectancy. The infant begins to see that there is some predictability in the relationship and gains a sense of what is to take place during these games.
Give-and-take games. This involves the infant selecting an object and passing it over to the adult. The adult accepts with full gestures and then hands object back to infant. This is repeated until participants lose interest.	Turn-taking. Hand control. Learning to hold on and let go.

(continued...)

Table 4 (continued): Interactive play sessions for infants aged 6–12 months

Interactive play session	Reason for game/interactional pattern
Mirrors. Adult and infant make funny faces in the mirror.	Building a sense of self and others. Social referencing.
Animal sounds. Using soft toys, have animals gallop towards infant making animal sounds, ending up cuddling, tickling, or kissing the infant.	Building a sense of expectancy. Language development.

Conclusion

It is in the context of sensitive interaction that infants seek out and explore their environment. Learning potential can only be realised when staff-child interactions focus on 'reading' and responding appropriately to each infant as an individual.

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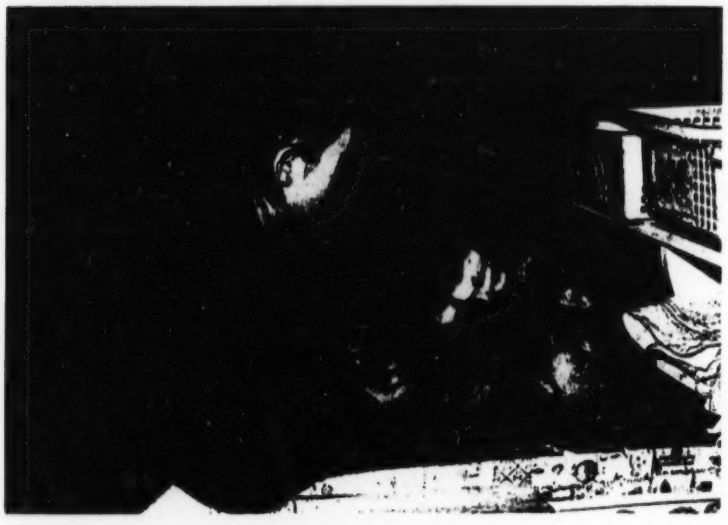

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